

Washington Research Foundation Welcomes New Cohort of Postdoctoral Fellows

Sixth annual cohort will begin three-year projects in Washington state research institutions in 2023

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- [Washington Research Foundation](#) (WRF) today

announced its sixth annual cohort of the WRF Postdoctoral Fellows. In 2023,

12 researchers will begin a three-year fellowship that will allow them to advance their careers and achieve key research goals. The fellows will be conducting research at the Benaroya Research Institute (BRI), Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center (Fred Hutch), University of Washington (UW) and Washington State University (WSU).



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Meher Antia, Ph.D.

Each year, WRF supports a cohort of postdoctoral scientists at research institutions across Washington state. These fellows are recognized for conducting transformative research on projects that have potential for real-world impacts in natural sciences and engineering-related disciplines.

The 2023 Fellows were selected for funding of up to \$292,500 each by an independent, national committee

chaired by [David Galas, Ph.D.](#), a senior investigator at Pacific Northwest Research Institute. Throughout their fellowship, researchers will have an opportunity to take part in professional development events and network with others in the research and entrepreneurial innovation communities. Additionally, they will present their work at an annual symposium.

“We are honored to partner with the 2023 postdoctoral fellows as they continue their research that has the possibility to change the future of science,” said Meher Antia, Ph.D., WRF’s director of grant programs. “WRF is looking forward to watching these fellows grow as independent researchers over the course of their three years in the program.”

Through the postdoctoral program, WRF seeks to cultivate talents of outstanding researchers in

Washington state at a critical time in their careers and help them achieve excellence during their fellowship and beyond. The ultimate goal for the fellows' research is to benefit the public by enabling innovative discoveries that eventually lead to the creation of new products, services or practices.

The 2023 WRF Postdoctoral Fellows include:

- Melanie Anderson, who completed a doctorate in mechanical engineering at UW. During her fellowship in the biology department at UW, she will continue her research developing robust and dynamic biohybrid chemical sensing devices.
- Xochitl Clare is completing a doctorate in marine biology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and will carry out her fellowship in the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences at UW. Xochitl will use eco-physiology and scientific storytelling to understand and mitigate effects of pollution and ocean warming in Placencia, Belize.
- Delphine Depierreux completed a doctorate in viral immunology at the University of Cambridge, UK, and will carry out her fellowship in the human biology division at Fred Hutch as she works on the developmental pathway of broadly neutralizing antibodies against HIV which are a cornerstone of vaccine strategies.
- Andrew Hunt completed his Ph.D. at Northwestern University in chemical and biological engineering. He will carry out his fellowship at the Institute for Protein Design at UW designing enzymes that degrade plastic.
- Brendan Larsen completed his doctorate in evolutionary biology at the University of Arizona and will be carrying out his research in the Basic Sciences Division at Fred Hutch on how viruses evolve to escape immune pressure.
- Wangcheng Liu completed a doctorate in the materials science and engineering program at WSU and will continue his research in the Composite Materials and Engineering Center at WSU, aiming to develop new recycling tactics and strategies to handle the plastic waste problem.
- Arvind Pillai completed a doctorate in evolutionary biology at the University of Chicago. He will carry out his fellowship at the Institute for Protein Design at UW, where he will work on designing synthetic de-novo protein switches that can alter their structure and activity in response to various cellular signals.
- Chetan Poudel completed a doctorate in biotechnology at the University of Cambridge and will apply light sheet microscopy of novel fluorescent probes and machine learning to study 3D renal pathology in the UW chemistry department.
- Gemma O'Connor is completing her doctorate in earth science at UW and will carry out her fellowship in UW's oceanography department to investigate the drivers of glacier retreat in Antarctica.
- Sarah Pristash completed a doctorate in chemistry at UW. She will continue with the chemistry department at UW for her fellowship, where she will work on improving the efficiency of solar cells using novel materials for upconversion.
- Iroro Tanshi completed a doctorate in biology at Texas Tech University, and for her fellowship at UW she will unravel how morphological traits, diet and habitat use impact the responses of bat species to environmental disturbance. This work will ultimately inform range-wide

community-based protection of the endangered Short-tailed Roundleaf Bat.

- Sheenam Verma completed her doctorate in structural biology at the Regional Centre for Biotechnology in India. She will carry out her fellowship at BRI to study how autoantibodies that target microbiota antigens might contribute to autoimmunity, with the goal of identifying novel biomarker candidates for diagnosis of autoimmune disorders.

The next application for WRF Postdoctoral Fellowships is expected to open in May 2023.

About Washington Research Foundation:

Washington Research Foundation (WRF) supports research and scholarship in Washington state, with a focus on life sciences and enabling technologies.

WRF was founded in 1981 to assist universities and other nonprofit research institutions in Washington with the commercialization and licensing of their technologies. WRF is one of the foremost technology transfer and grant-making organizations in the nation, having earned more than \$445 million in licensing revenue for the University of Washington and providing over \$138 million in grants to the state's research institutions to date.

WRF Capital, a reserve pool of funds that Washington Research Foundation invests in local early-stage companies, has backed 119 startups since 1996. Returns support WRF's investment and grant-making programs.

For additional information, please visit <https://www.wrfseattle.org/>.

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